

Solution Focused Roundtable

creating useful conversations in organizations

Sometimes organizations like companies, schools, non-profit organizations seem more like a shark pond than a productive and supportive community that is collaborating to achieve a goal. When the going gets tough, the community members sometimes start to blame each other. Different groups with different interests emerge and rumors run wild.

If you want to prevent this or if you are near that scenario with your community, you might consider using a **Solution Focused Roundtable** to encourage your community to have productive rather than destructive conversations. A roundtable can be held for all sorts of organizations and with any number of people.

Goals and Benefits

The **Solution Focused Roundtable** is a facilitated large group intervention that enables organizations to (re-)start focusing on what they have to get right, on what they want to achieve. The structured discussions with the facilitator (during the large group meeting and in the preparation of the meeting) provide many people in the organization with a fresh view of the possibilities and the tools for leading conversations that focus on the solution rather than on who is responsible for the problem. All they need is an open mind and some interest in other people and in doing things in a more productive way. Of course, tangible outcomes are difficult to describe, but these are some of the things customers describe as benefits of the Solution Focused Roundtable:

- More respect for each other's work
- More openness and commitment
- More people asking: "how can we do it?" instead of "why have YOU failed to do it?"
- An understanding that most members in the organization are really trying their best
- A better way of giving feedback
- A clearer understanding of the future and strategy of the organization
- More understanding of the different stakeholders

Speaking! GmbH
Gluckensteinweg 10-14
D-61350 Bad Homburg
Germany

Fon: +49-6172-684905
Fax: +49-6172-684906

www.solutionsacademy.com
info@solutionsacademy.com

"When I heard the management talk about where they really wanted to go with the new organizational structure and realized that they were also worried about keeping as many on board as possible, I was relieved. I suddenly understood that they aren't just sitting in the board room trying to make more and more money, they are interested in us..."

"It was really interesting to talk to our end customers face to face in the roundtable meeting – they seem to want pretty much what we deliver, but I gained valuable insights into what is important to them and why – it's almost like our product came to life for me more"

"Our organization was a big mess – we were all volunteers and we all wanted to drive our city to provide better child care for under three year olds, but some people in our initiative would not even talk to one another. The roundtable helped us to talk about what is important and how we can stop fighting each other – it wasn't easy, but really useful."

The Process

Preparation

The facilitator speaks with several representatives of each stakeholder group of the organization asking for their ideas on what could be the best possible outcome of the roundtable discussion which will be held in one room with anybody present who is interested to come. The facilitator finds out what should stay the same and what people would like to be different in their organization and elicits the most important topics for the discussion at the Roundtable meeting.

Development

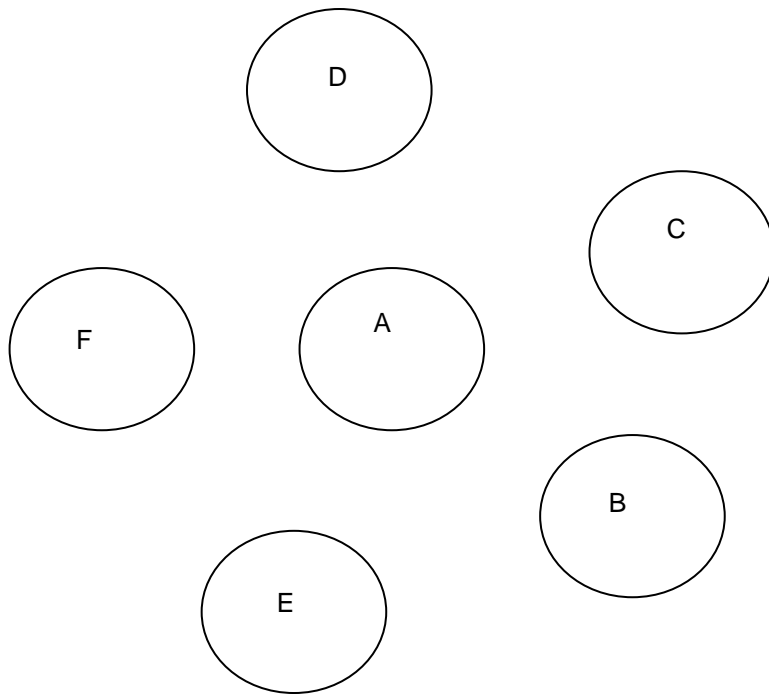
Based on this information the facilitator develops a format and a central question for the roundtable discussion and invites the relevant stakeholder groups to the roundtable meeting.

Meeting

One stakeholder group – usually the people who can make decisions to move the organization forward – sits at a table in the middle of the room. The other stakeholders are at different tables in the same room. The facilitator speaks with the stakeholder group while the others are listening. Topics can be their hopes for the development of the organization, what they would like to know from the other stakeholders, what they are worried about, where they would like to be in a year's time.

After this conversation one member of the central table goes to each peripheral table and continues the discussion of the central question there, listening to the other stakeholders. Afterwards they return to the central table and repeat what they heard, what were the most important issues, what impressed them etc. In this discussion the facilitator can help to crystallize a few topics that can be taken forward.

These topics can either be taken up by one of the central team members or there can be commitments, committees, etc. which then take the issues and work on them – either in this meeting or in another meeting.



Examples

A: the management

B-F: different departments (production, sales, marketing, administration)

A: the school board

B-F: the teachers, the parents, the students, the administration

A: the management

B-F: the customers

A: the city council

B-F: the NGOs, concerned citizens

Progress report / Document

The actions agreed on in the meetings are communicated immediately after the meeting and a progress report is sent to all stakeholders no later than two months. Many organisations also produce a short video or photo collection from the meeting to increase the feeling of joint commitment of the community and response.